



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

Social Partnership Duty Annual Report 2025/2026 – Appendix 1





Introduction

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 (SPPP Act) which came into force on 01 April 2024, requires the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (MAWWFRA), as a public body, to produce an annual report to evidence how they have complied with the Social Partnership Duty.

The annual report summarises how the Authority has complied with the duty which must be submitted to the Social Partnership Council (“SPC”) for scrutiny. Section 18 of the SPPP Act states:

Social Partnership reports:

- (1) A public body must prepare, in respect of each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the duty.
- (2) The report must be agreed with the public body’s recognised trade unions or (where there is no recognised trade union) other representatives of its staff or contain a statement explaining why it was not agreed.
- (3) The public body must publish the report, and submit it to the SPC, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

The SPPP Act seeks to improve the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of people in Wales by strengthening the role of social partnership within strategic decision-making, through collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, promoting fair work and socially responsible public procurement. It is intended to complement other legislation, including the Socio-economic Duty and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA 2015).

The WBFGA places a well-being duty upon listed public bodies across Wales to carry out sustainable development. In doing so, public bodies must set and publish well-being objectives that are designed to maximise contribution toward the national well-being goals and take all reasonable steps to deliver those objectives set.

In carrying out sustainable development, public bodies listed under section 6(1) of the WBFGA, will be required, in so far as is reasonable, to seek consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions, when setting their well-being objectives and making decisions of a strategic nature about the reasonable steps they intend to take to deliver those objectives set.

Section 16(2) of the Act sets out several specific requirements relating to the Duty, which MAWWFRA must comply with when ‘seeking consensus or compromise’. The requirements are intended to ensure that trade unions are fully and properly involved when a public body sets its well-being objectives, or when making strategic decisions.

The Act states that in order to seek consensus or compromise, a public body must include its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (in particular): -



- a) Consulting them at a formative stage of the process, and
- b) Otherwise involving them throughout the process by:
 - (i) Providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and
 - (ii) Providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.

Supporting evidence of how Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has complied with the Social Partnership Duty.

It is worth noting that MAWWFRAs role is to deliver proactive preventative services; and reactive fire and rescue services to the people of mid and west Wales in an open, transparent and cost-effective way; acting in the best interests of mid and west Wales and its communities.

In discharging its role MAWWFRA seeks to act for the greater good of all its Constituent Authorities and their communities. Operating within a framework laid down by the UK National and Welsh Government legislation, the Fire Authority discharges its functions by means of partnership working with the Fire Authority, its Members and Officers, operating under the guidance of the Chief Fire Officer.

The delegated day to day management and delivery of the Fire Service's functions is carried out by Officers under the overall control and guidance of the Chief Fire Officer, who discharges these functions in accordance with the policy framework and the determinations of the Fire Authority and its Committees. In so doing, the Chief Fire Officer is assisted by the Executive Leadership Team.

The Mid and West Wales Fire Service (MAWWFRS) is the operational arm responsible for delivering firefighting, rescue, and fire prevention services across the region. It is the body that carries out the day-to-day work of responding to emergencies, conducting fire safety inspections, and engaging in community safety initiatives.

Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2040

Recognising the need to plan for the longer term, the Service revised its planning arrangements which resulted in the introduction of a longer-term Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP 2040). As part of the development of the CRMP 2040, trade unions were identified as key stakeholders and were invited to attend Corporate Budget Planning days, during which an overview of the draft CRMP 2040 and its associated Improvement and Well-being Objectives, was presented by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, for their consideration and feedback. Trade Union representatives were also invited to attend the Fire Authority meeting which took place on the 25 March 2024 where the CRMP 2040 was presented for final approval, prior to publication.

Corporate Budget Planning meetings for this reporting period, took place on Monday, 02 September, Monday, 08 September and Monday, 10 November 2025, which Trade Union representatives are invited to attend.



A comprehensive consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken to help develop the CRMP, which trade union representatives were invited to participate in and provide feedback on during the 10-week consultation which took place between November 2023 and January 2024. The responses were considered fully, and each Improvement and Well-being Objective was reviewed and amended accordingly to reflect the feedback received before final publication.

As part of Improvement and Well-being Objective 6, to engage and consult with communities to understand their expectations, an action was included to engage with trade unions in alignment with Social Partnership duties regarding organisational change. The progress of which is reported quarterly.

Following the introduction of the CRMP 2040, a new approach to performance monitoring was established through the creation of Performance Monitoring Groups, one for each Improvement and Well-being Objective. These groups aim to ensure continuous improvement, monitor progress and provide scrutiny against the delivery of the Improvement and Well-being Objective actions. The groups meet on a quarterly basis and trade union representatives are invited to attend all meetings.

In addition to the CRMP 2040 Performance Monitoring Groups, a Community Risk Management Delivery Board (CRMDB) Chaired by the Chief Fire Officer has been established. The CRMDB monitors the delivery of the performance made against each of the Improvement and Well-being Objectives, ensuring that:

- All activities are executed in alignment with the CRMP 2040.
- Monitoring and scrutinising performance and making decisions on escalated issues.
- Resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.
- Risks and issues are identified and mitigated, ensuring corrective actions are taken when necessary
- Stakeholder expectations are managed and identified key performance indicators (KPIs) are met.
- Providing strategic oversight and governance.
- Identification of any cross-cutting themes and interdependencies with other objectives are considered.

Trade union representatives are invited to attend CRMDB meetings, allowing them to receive updates on the progress being made regarding the delivery of CRMP 2040 and its associated Improvement and Well-being Objectives. CRMDB meetings for this reporting period, took place on Wednesday, 18 June 2025, Wednesday, 17 September 2025 and Wednesday, 17 December 2025, and Wednesday, 18 March 2026. Furthermore, the livestreaming and recording of CRMDB meeting has continued, therefore, allowing for the information to be accessed, if needed outside of the meeting.

Annual CRMP 2040 Objectives and Actions Review

As part of the Service's CRMP 2040, and to ensure the plan remains fit for purpose, an annual minor review is undertaken as part of the assurance process. This review confirms that each Improvement and Well-being Objective remains relevant, is progressing on



schedule, and continues to align with the Service's priorities at that time.

Each Improvement and Well-being Objective within the CRMP 2040 was reviewed by its respective Objective Performance Monitoring Group, on which Trade Union representatives are members. In addition, all proposed information and changes were circulated via email and MS Teams for consideration and feedback, ensuring that the views of all relevant stakeholders were captured.

Joint Consultative Forum

The Joint Consultative Forum (JCF) is an internal forum, made up of representation from the Fire Authority, namely the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority, 2 Members of the Resource Management Committee, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, as head of Workforce negotiation, 2 Principal Officers, Corporate Head of Resources, Head of Human Resources, 3 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representatives, 1 Unison representative, 1 General and Municipal Boiler Makers (GMB) representative, the Chair and Secretary of the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) and the Chair and Secretary of the Fire Officers Association (FOA).

The JCF meets biannually and provides a mechanism for the communication of information and ideas between Fire Authority Members, Officers and representatives of all employee sectors. Furthermore, the JCF provides employees with an opportunity through their representatives to express their views on proposals which may affect them and acts as a dispute resolution body in this regard.

The forum also acts as a dispute Resolution Body; provides a forum for the clarification of policies and procedures, provides a framework to ensure common standards are applied and gives employees an opportunity through their representatives to express their views on proposals which may affect them.

JCF meetings for the reporting period were held on Monday, 10 February 2025 and Monday, 23 March 2026.

Service Management and Trade Union meetings

Meetings between Service Management and FBU representatives take place on a quarterly basis, for negotiation and consultation. Ad-hoc meetings are also arranged, in agreement with both parties, to discuss significant matters.

The FBU roles of (Chair, Secretary and Organiser) are fulfilled by individuals from within the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) as additional elements over and above their day-to-day role. Recognising the commitment required to undertake these roles, a secondment opportunity was afforded to the individual undertaking the role of FBU secretary, allowing them to focus solely on union matters. There were two reasons for this, it was highlighted that there were vacancies within the positions of Chair and Organiser and the Service were conscious of the workload on one individual. Negotiations around shift changes were also in the process of being held and the Service wanted to ensure the FBU were afforded sufficient time to speak with their members about the planned change.



Meetings between Service management and the FBU for the reporting period, took place on 27 March, 28 April, 17 June, 07 November 2025 and 19 March 2026.

Meetings between Service Management and the Fire and Rescue Services Association FRSA who represent a significant number of On-Call firefighters across MAWWFRS are held on a quarterly basis, and meetings took place on 18 March, 19 June, 23 September 2025 and 26 March 2026.

Invitations for Agenda discussion points are issued to all meeting members a minimum of a week before a meeting takes place. Meeting are held at Service locations across the region to support the needs of attending On Call members. Minutes of meetings are jointly agreed upon and signed by the FRSA Chair and the Service.

The most prevalent trade unions within the Service Support Staff sector (Corporate Staff) are UNISON and GMB. Meetings between management and these trade unions occur on a scheduled quarterly basis with invitations for Agenda discussion points issued to all meeting members a week before a meeting takes place. All meetings are held at Service Headquarters and minutes of meetings are jointly agreed upon and signed by both trade unions and the Service.

Meetings between Service Management, Unison and GMB for the reporting period, took place on 28 January, 21 May, 23 July, 23 September, 26 November 2025 and 10 March 2026.

Service management meetings with FBU representatives were also held at Joint Fire Control (JFC), these are also attended by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFDS). Meetings follow the same format and frequency for negotiation and consultation purposes and were held as follows for this reporting period. 17 March, 25 June, 24 September and 26 November 2025.

Case Studies

Wildfire Balanced Room process

As part of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2040 and its commitment to best-practice engagement, the Service delivered a series of Balanced Room workshops to collaboratively explore and design solutions to the increasing risk and impact of wildfires.

Balanced Rooms are forums in which diverse stakeholders, each bringing different perspectives, interests and levels of influence, are equally represented and able to participate meaningfully. Their purpose is to foster open dialogue and ensure all views are considered.

During these sessions, participants explored risk mitigation, discussed key issues, and generated an unrestricted list of potential solutions before refining them into 3–5 proposals that may progress to formal public consultation. Across two in-person workshops and an online outcome session held between August and October 2025, stakeholders co-developed



a wide range of ideas which were then tested against core criteria: firefighter and community safety, legal compliance, and financial sustainability. These sessions brought together Service staff, external partners, union representatives (FBU and FRSA), land managers and community voices in a safe, inclusive and equally weighted environment, ensuring meaningful stakeholder involvement throughout.

This collaborative process led to the identification of five desirable criteria: Collaboration and Partnership, Prevention First, Specialist Capability and Consistency, Learning and Continuous Improvement, and Deliverability and Policy Alignment, and the development of eight priority options supported by a cross-cutting enabler. These outcomes span prevention, protection, response and recovery, including improved communications and data integration, enhanced public education and liaison, alignment of land-management subsidies, increased use of technology and mapping, strengthened PPE and welfare provision, specialist wildfire teams and modular vehicles, development of aerial firefighting capability, and structured post-incident recovery actions.

Together, these collaboratively designed proposals represent a significant step forward in shaping an innovative, stakeholder-informed wildfire strategy for the Service.

Flooding Balanced Room process

Continuing the climate-change theme and recognising that flooding incidents are increasing in both frequency and severity due to higher rainfall intensity and more sustained weather events, the Service held a series of Balanced Room Workshops on Friday 23 January, Thursday 10 February, and Wednesday 25 February 2026. These workshops were designed to capture operational, partnership and community perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with flood response and preparedness.

The sessions brought together operational staff and a wide range of external stakeholders, including His Majesty's Coastguard, Natural Resources Wales, Mountain Rescue, Outreach Rescue, Public Health Wales, Pembrokeshire County Council, Powys County Council, local councillors and trade unions, ensuring a fully representative and collaborative approach.

The outcomes from the workshops were still being finalised at the time this report was written.

Culture Progress update

The Service's two-year Culture Change Programme, delivered in partnership with Senseia, continues to progress as planned. The programme is structured into two key phases designed to strengthen organisational culture, enhance leadership capability and embed consistent behaviours across the Service.

Programme Phases

- Phase 1 – Repair (to Spring 2026):
Focused on listening, understanding, and establishing clear expectations across the organisation.
- Phase 2 – Rebuild (Spring 2026–Autumn 2027):
Concentrated on embedding agreed cultural standards into day-to-day practice and



ensuring these are consistently upheld.

Progress to Date

- Over 150 staff have taken part in validation sessions.
- Three-day workshops and 1:1 coaching sessions have been completed for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- Leadership workshops have been delivered for all personnel at Watch Manager level and above.
- Remaining management workshops are on track for completion in Quarter 1, 2026.

Key Actions Currently Underway

- Development of the Service's long-term cultural improvement plan, defining the future culture and associated behaviours.
- Review and modernisation of the Professional Standards framework and associated disciplinary processes.
- Embedding of the Wellbeing Strategy, alongside delivery of the Wellbeing Action Plan to strengthen staff support and organisational wellbeing.
- A full review of the employee lifecycle, including recruitment, induction, leadership development, career pathways and performance management.
- Following a review of the Independent Reporting Line function leading to its subsequent removal, a new interim confidential reporting system was introduced in September 2025 and will remain in place until a new long term reporting model is finalised.

Facilitated Social Partnership session with Senseia & Trade Unions

Facilitated Social Partnership sessions with Senseia, members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), and Trade Union representatives were held on Friday, 06 February and 05 March 2026. It is the aspiration that this combined partnership working leads to the generation of a signed Charter between ELT' and the Trade Unions paving the way for a more engaging and inclusive approach to workplace trade union partnerships within the Service.

Fair Work Charter – Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB)

As part of the Ceredigion Public Services Board the Service signed up to the Fair Work Charter, demonstrating the collective commitment of the PSB to promoting fair work principles across Ceredigion.

Comments from the Trade Unions in response to the Social Partnership Duty report.

Unison



The comments below were received from Unison.

I have read the report and can confirm it is accurate. I have nothing to add.

Feedback received from the General and Municipal Boiler Makers (GMB) representative.

The comments below were received from GMB.

I've now had the chance to read through the document and found it to be very detailed, clear, and accurate. I'm happy with it as presented and have no further comments to add.

Feedback received from the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) representative.

The comments below were received from the FRSA.

I commend the way the report has been written & presented, which is a vast improvement to what I remember last year, being much more detailed & clearly stating where the Service has given trade unions the opportunity to interact and be involved with key actions and decisions with regards to the CRMP 2040.

This I feel, embeds us (FRSA) in having a positive input into the CRMP Objectives and how we move forward & progress as one Service, with a transparent & cultural mindset to deliver the FRS both the public and employees expect in future years.

Being heavily involved in many CRMP Objective meetings over the past year, I am more than happy with the Social Duty Partnership Duty Report and how the Service has interacted with ourselves (FRSA) as a trade union.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

The below comments were received from the FBU

The Fire Brigades Union Brigade Committee welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Social Partnership Duty Annual Report for 2025/26.

While the report outlines a range of mechanisms and activities intended to demonstrate compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, the lived experience of FBU representatives and members does not align with the picture presented. We therefore feel it is necessary to provide a clear and honest account of the challenges we have faced in attempting to engage meaningfully with the Service under the principles of social partnership.

1. Engagement is often not formative, timely, or meaningful

The Act requires public bodies to:

"Consult at a formative stage, provide sufficient information and provide sufficient time to enable recognised trade unions to adequately consider what is proposed and respond."



However, the FBU has repeatedly experienced the opposite. Despite the report stating that trade unions are “invited to attend” various meetings and forums, attendance alone does not constitute meaningful engagement. In practice:

- *We are frequently informed of proposals after key decisions have already been shaped.*
- *Information is often limited, late, or incomplete, restricting our ability to consult members.*
- *Timeframes for response are compressed, making meaningful consultation impossible.*
- *Workforce voice is treated as an afterthought rather than a partner in shaping decisions.*

This directly contradicts the Service’s own statement that it “seeks consensus or compromise” and that trade unions are “fully and properly involved”.

Recent examples include:

- *Decision to disband the People and Culture Team*
- *Change to career break policy*

2. The burden placed on FBU representatives has become unsustainable

The report highlights the secondment of the FBU Secretary as evidence of support. However, this does not reflect the wider reality.

The pressure placed on FBU representatives, particularly during periods of organisational change, has been significant and, at times, unreasonable. This has contributed to:

- *Burnout among Brigade Committee members*
- *The resignation of the FBU Brigade Chair is directly linked to the strain created by the current approach to engagement*
- *Remaining reps are being left to manage increasing workloads without adequate time, information, or support*

This is not compatible with the Service’s stated commitment to “fair work”, “wellbeing”, or “constructive partnership”.

The secondment offered to the Brigade Secretary was a much-welcomed opportunity to try and achieve more effective collaborative working and to ease the burden. It did come with the caveat of 'requiring tangible results'. When asked for clarity in this matter, it was unclear what was meant, but the sitting secretary confirmed that the secondment was not about results or signing off agreements. Rather, a new way of working. The secondment was unfortunately overshadowed by the significant amount of work involved in Speak-ups, investigations, hearings and appeals and employment tribunal preparation and the heavily



time-consuming and divisive discussions around the proposal for 12-hour shifts, also including several unrealistic and unsustainable shift patterns which were not discussed on the 224 stations. A situation that was not effectively handled, resulting in a rally of over 250 FBU members at the service headquarters.

3. The report describes processes and best practices, not outcomes or actual working practices.

Much of the report lists meetings, invitations, and structures. However, the existence of a meeting does not demonstrate compliance with the Social Partnership Duty.

For example, the report states:

“Trade union representatives are invited to attend CRMDB meeting.”

and

“The JCF provides employees with an opportunity to express their views on proposals which may affect them.”

Yet the FBU’s experience is that:

- *These forums are often used to inform, not to consult*
- *Proposals are presented as near-final, not open to genuine influence*
- *Feedback is not consistently reflected in decision-making*
- *Engagement is procedural rather than collaborative*
- *Impact assessments are dictated rather than collaboratively explored together with all affected parties.*

The Act requires substantive involvement, not simply the existence of structures.

Last year, the FBU Brigade Secretary raised a complaint about the conduct of the previous Fire Authority Chair’s conduct and attitude towards Social Partnership during a meeting and outside of it with the Clerk to the Authority, and nothing was progressed

4. Balanced Rooms are a positive example—but an exception

The FBU wishes to acknowledge that the Balanced Room processes for Wildfire and Flooding represent a genuinely constructive and inclusive approach. These sessions:

- *Allowed equal participation*
- *Encouraged open dialogue*
- *Enabled genuine co-design of solutions*

This demonstrates that meaningful social partnership is possible when the Service commits to it. However, whilst the involvement and engagement in a balanced room is positive, it is



not a recognised way of formal consultation or negotiation and is being presented as such. It is an excellent opportunity for staff to engage and provide options to shape the working practices and policies moving forward.

However, these examples stand in contrast to the majority of workforce-related engagement, which does not reflect the same openness or collaborative spirit.

5. The report does not reflect the concerns we have repeatedly raised

The FBU has consistently raised concerns about:

- *Late or insufficient information*
- *Lack of early involvement*
- *Limited time to consult members*
- *Decisions being presented as faits accomplis*
- *The cumulative pressure on union reps*
- *Processes such as professional standards and the impact it has on employees, and the flaws and inconsistencies in the investigation, hearing and appeals processes.*

These concerns are not acknowledged anywhere in the report, despite the Act requiring that the annual report be:

“Agreed with the public body’s recognised trade unions or contain a statement explaining why it was not agreed.”

The current report does not reflect our experience and therefore cannot be agreed in its present form.

6. What the FBU is requesting

To move forward constructively, the FBU requests:

a. A joint review of engagement practices, specifically examining:

- *How and when trade unions are involved*
- *The timeliness and completeness of the information provided*
- *The adequacy of consultation periods, a clearly understood and defined agreement of what constitutes consultation and negotiation. Removing the individual conversations to sound out ideas and taking it as consultation / negotiation.*
- *The impact on rep workload and wellbeing*
- *Completing workstreams and proposals, including restructures*

b. A clear commitment to formative engagement, meaning:



- *Involvement before proposals are developed*
- *Transparent sharing of information*
- *Sufficient time for member consultation*
- *Formal meetings to sight any proposals that affect current terms and conditions or custom and practice working arrangements.*
- *Use negotiating meetings as intended and not as updates on decisions already made.*

c. A jointly developed Social Partnership Charter, as referenced in the report, with:

- *Clear expectations*
- *Defined processes*
- *Accountability mechanisms*

d. Recognition of the pressures on FBU reps, including:

- *Appropriate facility/release time*
- *Workload protections*
- *Support to prevent burnout*

FBU Conclusion

The FBU remains committed to working collaboratively with the Service in the interests of firefighter safety, workforce wellbeing, and effective public service delivery. We also recognise the shift towards more honest and transparent working, which will hopefully result in an improved service to the public and stakeholders. The engagement with the new CFO to date has been promising and gives genuine hope for an effective social partnership for the future. However, genuine social partnership requires more than attendance at meetings; it requires early involvement, transparency, respect for the workforce voice, and a commitment to shared decision-making following through consultation and started processes so that it translates into the action intended.

We hope the Service will work with us to address the concerns outlined above and to build a stronger, more authentic partnership going forward.

Conclusion

The Service remains committed to fostering close working relationships with Trade Unions regarding strategic decision-making and will continue to ensure its ongoing commitment to maintaining regular and transparent communication channels, via an array of already established consultation and negotiation mechanisms.



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Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

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I ddarparu'r gwasanaeth gorau posibl i
gymunedau Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru.

OUR VISION

To deliver the best possible service for
the communities of Mid and West Wales.



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